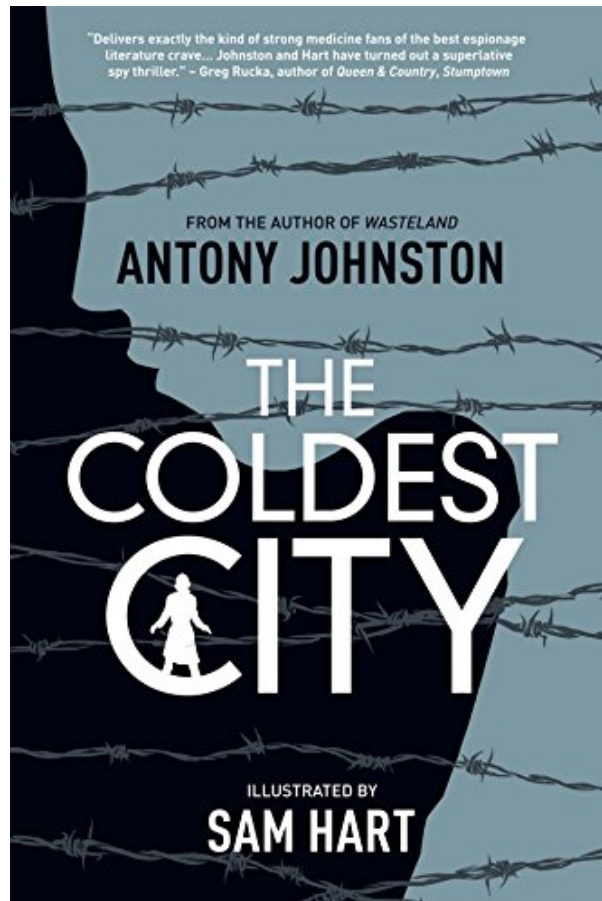


THE COLDEST CITY BY ANTONY JOHNSTON



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"Delivers exactly the kind of strong medicine fans of the best espionage literature crave... Johnston and Hart have turned out a superlative spy thriller." – Greg Rucka, author of *Queen & Country*, *Stumptown*

FROM THE AUTHOR OF *WASTELAND*

ANTONY JOHNSTON

THE
**COLDEST
CITY**



ILLUSTRATED BY

SAM HART

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178 pages!

November 1989. Communism is collapsing, and soon the Berlin Wall will come down with it. But before that happens there is one last bit of cloak & dagger to attend to. Two weeks ago, an undercover MI6 officer was killed in Berlin. He was carrying information from a source in the East - a list that allegedly contains the name of every espionage agent working in Berlin, on all sides. No list was found on his body. Now Lorraine Broughton, an experienced spy with no pre-existing ties to Berlin, has been sent into this powderkeg of social unrest, counter-espionage, defections gone bad and secret assassinations to bring back the list and save the lives of the British agents whose identities reside on it.

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Most helpful customer reviews

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Spy story with a strong woman

By Christine N. Ethier

Copy recieved via Netgalley.

There is an idea that spy stories are male stories. True, you have stories about spies that concern women, but those usually have a good dose of "romance" in them. Even excellent ones like *Wish Me Luck* have a good, strong dosing of romance. The women in such spy movie tend to be helpless, evil until they met the good guy and then they either repent or get dumb, or to be in charge like M in James Bond. There are exceptions, *Wish Me Luck* had tough women in it, but overall you have to wonder how the woman got into the spy business to begin with if she was going to break so quickly.

This is why it is nice to read this graphic novel. This is very much like *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier Spy*, but with more twists, excellent well done twists. If you are looking for a James Bond spy story, this isn't for you. But if you are looking for a cerebral story set in the waning days of the Cold War, this fits the prescription.

The central character is Lorraine, a woman sent to Berlin to discover what has happened to a missing list. You know those list that if it gets into the wrong hands, everyone dies. It's true that this plot device is so overused it is almost funny. The great thing is that it works well in this graphic novel because Johnston brings freshness to it. Even in graphic novel format, the characters are well shaded and far from flat. Lorraine is an interesting, a tough as nails woman (she is not a girl), very much like the spies that tend to show up in the British drama. Supporting characters are also very believable. This is a nicely done and thrilling mystery in terms of plot.

At first, I wasn't overly impressed with the artwork of Sam Hart. It is very abrupt, brutal; minimalistic which isn't a type of style that I normally like. At first, I got frustrated at the panels where the faces are blank ovals (such panels are not the majority, but there are enough to notice), then I realized that the style, especially the blank faces really suits a spy story. It's a question of being two-faced, which is a question Lorraine has to answer, but of which face one actually has, of whom one actually is. The artwork, therefore, re-enforces the

theme of the graphic novel as well as being a representation of the action.

This is very cool.

I must say that this is not the type of work I would've normally read, but it was being offered via Netgalley as "read this now", so I decided to give it a try. I'm glad I did. Even though the story is based in the real world, in some ways it reminded me of Watchmen in terms of theme. This is a graphic novel worth reading.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

The Coldest City

By Liz W.

Bodies pile up and twists abound in *The Coldest City*, a complicated espionage thriller that features a gutsy female spy on a mission in West Berlin, 1989. Fans of John le Carré's spy thrillers will definitely enjoy this dense tale of intrigue, but readers not familiar with spy jargon, or not in the mood for challenging material, may want to look elsewhere.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Cold as the Title Suggests, But Could Be Confusing

By Christina (A Reader of Fictions)

The history major in me could not pass up this particular graphic novel. Although the Cold War is not one of the time periods I especially gravitate towards, it is definitely a great era for spy drama, which is what *The Coldest City* is. There's as much drama, backstabbing and mystery as an episode of *Alias*. Well, maybe not quite that much, or quite that colorful, but still quite dramatic.

All of that drama, though, is told in a very detached style. Most of the story is told in flashbacks as Broughton, the female spy sent to Berlin to see what's going on after the death of an agent, gives her report to her superiors at MI6. The graphic novel really had a noir feeling I thought, which was only exacerbated by the black and white illustrations.

The artwork did not particularly appeal to me, although it did complement the atmosphere of the story. The images are very shadowed and obscured, rather like the truth. I appreciate them for that, but, aesthetically, they're not especially pleasing.

The one thing that I really felt made this graphic novel stand out was, for me personally, a big plus, but could, for another reader, be a serious detractor. Johnston does not just do all of the dialog in English; the language spoken by the character is the language on the page. This is not especially unique. What is unique is that there is rarely any translation offered. If you don't speak that language, it's all up to the context or an online translator for you. Most of the non-English parts were German, which, conveniently enough, is the other language I know, so I was fine and really enjoyed this. Had I not spoken that language, I think I might have been annoyed and frustrated, because the parts in German are not always simple and easy to derive from context.

All in all, I came away feeling rather meh about this one. The story didn't feel quite fleshed out enough for me to really feel wowed. However, I think it could have some definite appeal for fans of spy stories.

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